

News Release



News Release

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June 23, 2011
#110623-BURNBAN

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Commission Issues Burn Ban for Santa Rosa County

With more than 95 percent of Santa Rosa County exceeding 600 on the Florida Division of Forestry's Drought Index, the Santa Rosa Board of County Commissioners enacted a burn ban today, June 23. Even with the storms that recently passed through the county, the National Weather Services estimates Santa Rosa County to be 11.5 inches below normal rainfall levels for the year. The ban will remain in effect until the threat of major wildfire emergencies in the local area has been significantly reduced.

The ban prohibits open burning, to include but not limited to campfires, bonfires, yard debris, and other similar forms of incineration in both the incorporated and unincorporated areas of the county. State permitted burns, authorized fireworks displays, State of Florida legal consumer firework products such as sparklers, fireworks sales which are authorized by state law, and outdoor cooking in barbecue grills, smokers, or other outdoor stoves located at private residences are exempt. Violations are punishable by a fine of up to \$500.

With the coming Independence Day holiday festivities, residents are reminded that the only legal consumer firework products allowed in the State of Florida should bear the wording "emits a fountain or shower of sparks." Aerial devices are prohibited. To minimize your chance of a fire:

- Make sure you are not near dry grass, weeds, or other flammable materials such as gasoline, hairspray or alcohol. Cement or blacktop driveways or patios are good places for sparklers.
- Light only one sparkler at a time.
- Do not re-ignite a sparkler that has lost its spark.
- Dispose used sparklers in a bucket of water or sand or on a metal tray. Once cool, dispose of the used sparkler wires in the trash.

Although the use of gas and charcoal grills are permitted, the public is encouraged to keep a constant watch for any stray sparks or embers while cooking outdoors. Additionally, due to the potential for accidental ignitions, the use of motorized equipment such as ATVs and dirt bikes are not suggested during times of high wildfire risk. Lawnmowers can also pose accidental ignition risks.

One of the more effective ways to reduce the possibility of wildfires is to clear underbrush or debris blown down in storms. These dry plants and vegetation create more fuel for wildfires. Wildfire prevention tips include:

- Prune all branches around the residence to a height of 8 to 10 feet. Keep trees adjacent to buildings free of dead or dying limbs and moss.
- Remove all dead limbs, needles and debris from rain gutters.
- Avoid open burning completely, especially during this dry season.
- Regularly dispose of newspapers and rubbish.
- Rake leaves, dead limbs and twigs. Clear flammable vegetation from around and under structures.
- Remove dead branches that extend over the roof.
- Store flammable materials in approved safety cans.
- Keep items available that can be used as fire tools, such as a rake, handsaw, chainsaw, bucket and shovel.
- Never throw a lighted cigarette from the window of a vehicle or walk off and leave a burning cigarette.

